



Greenwood

Nottinghamshire's Community Forest bringing Sherwood Forest to your doorstep

GREENWOOD COMMUNITY FOREST IN ASHFIELD ANNUAL REPORT 2013 - 14

1) Greenwood Community Forest

Since 1991, Greenwood Community Forest has played a major role in revitalizing Nottinghamshire's landscape and communities, as expressed by its shared mission:

"To work in partnership to enable Nottinghamshire's communities to create, care for and to use woodlands and other high quality accessible green spaces in a sustainable way that benefits the environment, landscape and the local economy."

A small team is employed by Nottinghamshire County Council to work on behalf of the partnership. The team works closely with partner organisations to deliver benefits in areas including health, education and community cohesion as well as biodiversity.

This report has been produced for Ashfield District Council to outline achievements of the Greenwood Partnership over the past year. The report focuses on activities in the 2013/14 financial year but also makes reference to more recent events where this helps to provide a current position.

2) Strategic need and community opportunities

Greenwood's activities support the priorities of Ashfield District Council's Corporate Strategy. Our support in creating and managing green spaces helps to make Ashfield a place where people want to live and work whilst also providing the essential "green infrastructure" that encourages business investment and provides a resource that contributes towards public health and wellbeing. Our encouragement of Friends groups also encourages community responsibility for an attractive environment and assists in the council's aspiration of increasing levels of volunteering. Our delivery of access audits helps to make sure that the environment is accessible to all.

Because Greenwood works closely with its local communities, we also respond to local interests and opportunities. We introduce new audiences to the environment and encourage everyone to enjoy and appreciate green space. Individuals and groups are helped and supported to play an active role in caring for the green spaces on their doorstep.

3) Improving green spaces

The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) funded by Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), helped community groups to carry out a wide range of local conservation, heritage and amenity projects. Over 2013/14, the Greenwood team provided essential support to enable 18 LIS projects to go ahead within the Community Forest area, including these in Ashfield:



Silverhill's new path surfacing and viewpoint

Silverhill Pit Wood – access and interpretation project, £17,000.

We supported the Silverhill Wood Active Network (SWAN) community group to carry out access improvements and also to create on-site interpretation. Working in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council's Green Estates Team and the Forestry Commission.

Brierley Forest Pond Angling Club – fishing equipment and storage facility, £5,000.

We organised a site survey and planning permission to enable a new storage container to be installed within a woodland setting adjacent to the lake. This now provides a base for events and activities and allows the angling club to develop its work promoting responsible angling and working with excluded pupils from local schools. Working with Ashfield District Council and Brierley Forest Park Trust.



Learning new skills at Brierley Forest Country Park







4) Extra trees for many benefits



Quarrydale Academy tree planting






Since 2000, Greenwood's Community Tree Planting Grants have encouraged schools and community groups to play their part in creating the Community Forest. We provide a simple application process to receive funding and back it up with advice and guidance to make it easy for groups to get involved. Since its establishment, the scheme has provided grants totalling over £64,000 to support over 205 projects across the Greenwood area. Over 17,400 trees have been planted, involving around 7,400 participants.

The 2013/14 scheme was promoted to all local authority partners and parish councils and schools. We supported tree planting that delivered a range of community benefits:

-  **Trees for Shade** - carefully placed trees to counteract the warming effects of climate change
-  **Memorial** – commemoration of former colleagues and friends
-  **Landscape** – providing screening and attractive feature
-  **Education** – cover and interest for outdoor classrooms
-  **Healthy living** – fruit trees to encourage a better diet
-  **Biodiversity** – enhancing local wildlife

Four schemes were supported within Ashfield, receiving over £1,300 of grants and involving 134 people. The table below provides a summary:

Community Tree Planting Schemes in Ashfield

Location	Trees	Participants	Aims	Summary
Quarrydale Academy	16	10	 	Creating outdoor classroom in school grounds and supporting vocational training programme for pupils.
Brierley Forest Country Park	4	30		Celebrating the contribution made by four former members of the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum.
Mapplewells Primary School	14	67		Creating wooded area for Forest School activities.
Hillocks Primary School	34	27		Creating outdoor area suitable for Forest School activities.
Overall	68	134		Total grants of £1,318

5) The Friends of Greenwood Community Forum

“Friends” groups help to improve, care for and promote the use of green spaces, carrying out works on site and acting as a link to the general public. In August 2000, we established the Friends of Greenwood Community Forum, which continues to provide a valuable platform for discussion, supporting and encouraging local groups. Newly formed groups have gained confidence from hearing about the experience of others whilst even longer-standing groups welcome new ideas.

Greenwood supports the Forum, by “sign posting” sources of advice, giving information and solving problems, also by providing some funding to cover the cost of meetings and administration. We also produce a Directory of groups for volunteer bureaux and for potential volunteers.

The Chair of the *Forum* sits on Greenwood’s Partnership Board, ensuring a strong link between Greenwood’s governance and its community support. In return, Friends groups have supported Greenwood partners, helping several sites to gain Green Flag status by virtue of demonstrable links to the local community.

Since 2010, the Greenwood team has helped *Forum* members to move towards a greater level of independence. The *Forum* now has its own committee, constitution and bank account; in 2013 it engaged a part time secretary to carry out essential administration.

Over the last year, we helped the Forum to continue this process, by working with the committee to develop project proposals to help member groups with training and joint promotion. Unfortunately, the associated funding bid proved unsuccessful, but the process still helped the *Forum* to clarify its aspirations and to draft policies regarding equality and child protection. We expect to refine and resubmit the bid in 2014/15.

The *Forum* met four times last year including a visit to Huthwaite in February 2014, which was attended by representatives of twelve groups. Following their business meeting, the Forum proceeded to **Brierley Forest Park** to plant four trees to commemorate members of the Forum who had died in recent years. The trees were funded by the Greenwood Community Tree Planting Grant. Friends and families of those being commemorated helped to plant the trees.



Memorial tree planting at Brierley Forest Country Park

6) Supporting local groups

The Greenwood team helps to set up new groups where partners or the local communities have identified opportunities. We continue to support established groups by offering guidance and support on a range of matters. This can range from common concerns like recruitment and fund-raising, to new opportunities, like the use of social media. We often supplement professional advice with “signposting” to other groups that have already dealt with similar concerns.

Last year, we supported over 45 such groups, encompassing “Friends”, walking and health groups, including these from Ashfield:

- Brierley Forest Park Trust
- Hucknall Taking Steps
- Kings Mill Reservoir
- Kingsway Park
- Kirkby & District Conservation Society
- Portland Park
- SWAN
- Walk On
- Ranges, The
- RSPB
- Rookery Park

Our support to individual groups included advice to the **Friends of Kings Mill Reservoir** about educational activities for families. We also encouraged the group to borrow any educational resources held by the team.

We organised site visits and meetings with the **Friends of Rookery Park**, which led to the establishment of a local events programme including a bird box workshop with Mapplewells School. We likewise met on site with the **Friends of The Ranges**, which led to the organisation of practical task days to encourage new participants and to provide enhanced maintenance on site.



Measuring up for access audits

7) Improving access for all

It is important that green space sites are as far as possible, accessible to all. Unfortunately, a number of barriers can prevent individuals from making use of a site, ranging from physical barriers associated with choices in countryside furniture, to issues around the provision of information both on and off-site. Greenwood has championed the idea of conducting access audits on sites to provide a consistent approach in assessing problems.

This year, we completed a report and mapping for **Brierley Forest Country Park** on behalf of Ashfield District Council.

We also provided advice to a teacher from Hillocks Primary School in Sutton in Ashfield, about setting up a Forest School. We met to discuss resources and to share information and offered advice about enhancing the school grounds to provide a natural area for the children to use.

Greenwood Community Awards

Volunteers' efforts should not be taken for granted. Since 2001, Greenwood has highlighted the contribution of individual volunteers and local groups through an annual celebration with the provision of awards for outstanding effort. Nominations are drawn from partner organizations and from fellow volunteers and the ceremony is always a highlight of the Greenwood year. We aim to provide an uplifting evening for the audience and some recognition and further motivation for all nominees.



Hucknall "Taking Steps"

116 people attended our 2013 Awards ceremony in Papplewick. 24 different community groups were represented, spanning "Friends" and conservation groups, Walking for Health, school and youth groups.

Nominations came from all districts within the Community Forest and included recognition for two of Ashfield's groups:

- Dave Reason received the "Local Hero" Award for his energetic approach to being a volunteer warden at **Silverhill Wood**.
- Hucknall Taking Steps celebrated their tenth anniversary with a Certificate in the Walking For Health category.

"The presentation of photographs and speech about Sharon was excellent. Thank you to the Greenwood Community Forest. The award meant a great deal to her and to the Friends of Fisher Lane Park." - Jill Duckmanton, Friends of Fisher Lane

"We had a lovely night at the awards and were honoured to win, the children were thrilled when I took the award into school for them" - Ann Alcock, teacher, Eastlands Junior School



8) Working in partnership

Greenwood is one of **England's Community Forests** (ECF) and so shares experience with other initiatives set up to enhance urban fringe landscapes. We use teleconferences and an annual conference to discuss common areas of interest, which have ranged from launch of the Planning and Forestry Network to developing a "wood culture".

One particular issue that is likely to affect a number of the Community Forests is the proposed creation of the HS2 second phase railway line, so the Forests have aimed to provide a shared response about common issues. The Forests expect to be neutral about the creation of the line, but are keen to support tree planting and other mitigation should the scheme go ahead. We met jointly with HS2 to promote this standpoint, and Greenwood also provided a presentation to the Department for Transport's Environment Round Table in January 2014.

Greenwood has supported the concept of a **Regional Park** for Sherwood Forest, to co-ordinate conservation efforts whilst seeking added benefits to the local economy and communities. To help in taking forward implementation, we have been an active member of the Regional Park Board and chaired the Funding Working Group until July 2013, paving the way for the Sherwood LPS bid. We have also produced a Position Statement, to outline the positive roles that Greenwood could play to support the Regional Park with regard to strategic tree planting, community engagement and support of local groups.

The Greenwood team also supports a number of other partnership initiatives and fora, including:

- Nottinghamshire Biodiversity Action Group
- Sherwood Habitats Strategy Group and Sherwood Habitats Forum
- RSPB "Futurescapes"

9) Sustaining the partnership

Greenwood's core funding levers in additional funding to cover further project costs:

LIS projects facilitated by Greenwood represented over £172,000 of additional funding to local communities. The team had also been successful with its own LIS application to widen Greenwood's "Trees for Shade" project: this provided an extra £10,000, to support further tree planting throughout the county, £6,000 of which was spent in the Greenwood area. By working in partnership with Sherwood Forest Trust, we were able to extend community tree planting further thanks to £1,600 from Defra's Big Tree Plant.

Completion of the project *Thynghowe and the Forgotten Heritage of Sherwood* had been made possible by our earlier support to the Friends of Thynghowe in 2011, which brought in £50k for their community heritage project.

A major initiative was to support a £3.7m bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Landscape Partnership Scheme in Sherwood. Greenwood has co-ordinated the effort of a number of organisations that came together under the banner of the Sherwood Forest Regional Park. Our 2013 bid was unsuccessful but partners agreed to refine proposals for resubmission in 2014. This second bid has been successful, which will release £150k of funding to enable further development work to start in 2015.

10) Promoting the partnership

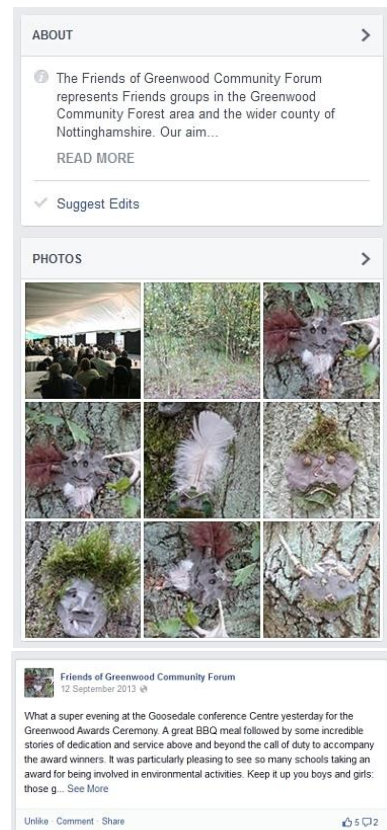
The Greenwood team issued a number of media releases promote a range of initiatives, including:



- Community tree planting – advance promotion of the grant scheme and coverage of its individual projects.
- Greenwood Community Awards, which led to coverage in the Chad, Nottingham Evening Post and Hucknall Dispatch, amongst others.
- Volunteering “case studies” to showcase volunteering on parks and open spaces, focusing on some of the year’s Award winners.
- The Friends of Greenwood memorial tree planting at Brierley Forest Park.

We also promoted Greenwood’s activities using a variety of other media:

- Three roller banners were produced to promote Greenwood’s mission and achievements and its support of community tree planting, events and education.
- Greenwood Community Forest website was updated.
- The directory of Friends of Greenwood was updated. This promotes the *Forum* as well as individual Friends groups, volunteer organisations and Walking Groups. The directory is distributed widely, including to local voluntary bureaux.
- The *Forum* Facebook page was used to promote events organised by Greenwood and local groups.



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